

CHILDREN PREPARED FOR THE 21st CENTURY

1. Build the capacity of the state’s arts learning systems to teach 21st century skills.

North Carolina was among the first states in the nation to commit to teaching 21st century skills. The State Board of Education adopted policies to ensure that students graduate from high school with the competencies needed for success in the 21st century global economy, including innovation, critical thinking, creative problem solving, effective communication, and collaboration. National research studies conducted within the last decade show that the arts are highly effective in teaching these skills, creating a stimulating environment for learning, improving test scores, and reducing drop-out rates.

North Carolina has long been a leader in showing that the arts and education are powerful partners in preparing students for a successful future. The North Carolina School of the Arts, established in 1963, was the first state-supported residential school that provided professional performing arts training for high school students. The A+ Schools Program, begun in 1995, is among the nation’s oldest functioning arts-based whole-school reform initiatives. A+, which views the arts as fundamental to teaching and learning in all subjects, includes 42 schools in 25 counties. The Basic Education Program (BEP) adopted by the legislature in 1994, requires schools to provide students with arts instruction in the areas of dance, music, theater, and visual arts. Unfortunately, the BEP has never been adequately funded and is implemented only as funding allows. However, a legislative study committee has recently recommended that the high school graduation requirements include one credit of arts education.

To help our artists and teachers effectively use the arts in the classroom, we’ve supported training programs conducted by the Kennedy Center’s Partners in Education, the Lincoln Center Institute, and the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning through the Arts. Given the new national focus on 21st century skills, we need to expand these programs and focus on the teaching of imagination, innovation, and creativity through the arts.



Above: Local arts councils are a community gathering place for arts experiences of all kinds. Arts of the Albemarle renovated an historic office building in downtown Elizabeth City to create a regional arts center. Here, children from across the region take the stage for a production of Zambezi Rhythms. Photo courtesy Arts of the Albemarle.

STRATEGIES

Work with the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center Institute, and Wolf Trap Institute to develop a comprehensive training program for artists and educators for teaching 21st century skills. Designate 3-5 regional sites to host and coordinate training programs.

Build new relationships with foundations, institutes of higher learning, and other educational organizations in the state to increase resources and to elevate the arts as core to the development of student success.

Advocate for the institution of the high school graduation arts requirement and assist in recruiting future arts teachers to meet the increased demand.